

## **Prepared Testimony**

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***Japan's Relations with Its Neighbors: Back to the Future?***

**Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Japan's contemporary relations with its neighbors. If I may, I would like to first submit, for the record, three essays on Japan that reflect well my discussion of how the Sino-Japanese relationship may affect the U.S.-Japan Alliance.**

**They are "Paradigms Lost: Japan's Nationalist Drift" in the September/October issue of *The American Interest* by Professor Mike Mochizuki of George Washington University; one by the noted journalist Ms. Ayako Doi "Rendezvous at Graceland: tender lover, mabe, but no peace and stability," in *PacNet Newsletter* #31A, July 7, 2006; and one by myself, "Arlington is No Yasukuni" in *Foreign Policy in Focus*, June 29, 2006.**

**J**apanese and Chinese hold strikingly similar opinions of each other—both are negative. Since the normalization of Japan's postwar relations with China in 1978, opinion surveys document a clear deterioration of goodwill after nearly two decades of good relations. This trend has accelerated over the past ten years, especially after the contentious 1998 visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin and the start of Japan's recession. Most noticeable is how much the decline of trust tracks the rise of internal socio-economic anxieties in both countries. Most troubling is how closely increasing animosity between the two countries follows Washington's focus on developing a strong security alliance with Japan.

In the late 1970s, nearly 70 percent of the Japanese surveyed felt positively toward China, but today nearly 70 percent hold an opposite, negative view. This reversal of goodwill is mirrored in China by nearly the same percentages as in Japan. In 2006, neither nation has a good impression of the other; each feels little affinity toward the other's citizens. [See attached charts]

The two countries, at first, appear perfect opposites. One is a managed, mature capitalist democracy and the other is a developing market economy overseen by a Communist oligarchy. But there are many similarities as well. Both are ancient societies forged into nation-states by foreign ideologies. Both have citizens with weak national identities and leaderships that aspire to build stronger ones. Both are confronting inward-looking, individualist trends that distance their citizens from the state. Both societies are struggling with expanding personal responsibilities after a period of rigid conformity. Both economies are grappling with the dislocations caused by free market capitalism after years of state planning and guaranteed employment. In short, both China and Japan have witnessed a decade of social change brought about by rapidly transforming economies in an era of globalization.

If you were to ask which country had a

- Widening disparity between the rich and the poor, the haves and have-nots
- Dramatic income inequality
- Inadequate social safety net and job security
- Disaffected youth, high youth unemployment
- Social dislocation and ennui
- Bureaucratic incompetence and cover up
- Growing gap between rural and urban economies
- Rising crime and corruption

The answer is, both do.

It is in this context that mutual ill-will has grown. For both China and Japan the primary issue is one of domestic discontent and insecurity not fully addressed by the state. Income inequality and crime top the concerns of the average person in both countries. Thus, the Chinese and Japanese share a unique period in their nation-building. Their central governments are faltering in their ability to provide social stability and cohesion—a sense of safety and material well-being.

The result is a new emotional nationalism. Its hallmark is that leaders in both Tokyo and Beijing are looking inward and defining security by making *Chineseness* or *Japaneseness* a civic, rather than an ethnic quality. It is the “national” in national security that both societies are seeking to clarify.

Citizens and leaders alike see moral degeneration as the source of their country’s problems. Rapid economic change has restructured traditional social relationships. Over and over in the speeches of Japanese and Chinese elites you read the same phrases on the importance of rebuilding a harmonious, principled society. There is a yearning for a time when things were better, or at least seemed so.

Oddly, for both countries, that “better” time is the period that began with the Sino-Japanese conflict in 1931 and that ends with World War II in 1945. Many Japanese leaders are wistful for the glory days of Imperial Japan and the victories of the Greater East Asian War. Chinese leaders find compelling the heroic saga of struggle in the War against Japanese Aggression. Each sees these times to be nobler of purpose and clearer of duty than those of today. Opinion

leaders in both countries advocate a form of “patriotic education” in order to relive their pasts to regain their futures.

Interestingly, both see nobility in the retelling of what ultimately were “failures.” In identifying themselves as “victims” of the Pacific War, Chinese and Japanese find proof of their moral sincerity. As capitalism transforms their economies, many see themselves as losers, as victims economically as well as politically. Against this backdrop, the Yasukuni Shrine war memorial looms large in the consciousness of both the Chinese and Japanese. Created in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to commemorate those combatants who died fighting for the Emperor, the Shrine was central to establishing a variant of Shintoism as a state ideology defining citizenship in Japan. Yasukuni glorifies death in war for one’s country. Thus, the Shrine symbolizes the success of the Imperial order for Japanese, while for Chinese and to a large extent to the South Koreans, the Shrine’s continued existence denies their success in defeating the Japanese Imperialist invaders.

It is in this volatile mix of emotions and social change that the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance exists. Currently, severe Constitutional restrictions prevent the full deployment of the already formidable Japan Self Defense Forces. Promises made by many prime ministers to the governments of Asia that Japan would never again become a major military power reinforce this constitutional restraint. Encouraged by the U.S., however, Japan is now on course toward military normalization and greater international involvement.

The new emotional nationalism of Asia changes how the U.S.-Japan Alliance is perceived in the region. For both Japan and China, nation-building now takes precedence over alliance building or regional stability. Japan's conservatives use the pressures of the new Alliance to resurrect old state symbols, martial pride, and the Japanese Army and Navy. China's conservatives point to the same Alliance to draw the country together to fight the familiar threats of so-called foreign imperialism and to modernize their military. Japan's new campaign to be the "thought leader" of Asia further stokes China's fears. The Chinese believe that Japan's unresolved wartime historical issues undermine any Japanese leadership.

Current Sino-Japanese tensions reflect each country's domestic stresses more than they do any inherent regional strategic competition. The Chinese and Japanese people are beset with anxieties about their future. Issues of inequality dominate the political discourse in each country. Their leaders want to restore and confirm pride and prestige to their people. Before trust can be established, a sense of emotional well-being or security must first be confirmed within each society. The increasing economic interdependency between China and Japan is fast taking a backseat to the rhetoric of patriotism, however ill-defined. For the United States, the strength of the U.S.-Japan Alliance rests in a better understanding of the tensions created by this new nationalism.

To rephrase a Chinese proverb, China and Japan have different beds, but the same dreams and the same nightmares.

## **Sino-Japanese Reconciliation**

At an August 2006 conference hosted by the Australian National University on Sino-Japanese Reconciliation (<http://www.china-japan-reconciliation.blogspot.com>), I proposed the following confidence building measures. Ways must be found to make the future less frightening and insecure. The first measures then must be immediate, tangible, and mutually understandable. This is the definition of sincere.

**1. Japan needs to come to terms with loss of the War and confirm its commitment to democracy.** Toward this end:

- a. Legislation similar to that in Germany that restricts hate speech, denial of wartime misdeeds, and protects those who try to educate about the war are important. For example, ensuring police protection of the comfort women museum in Tokyo would be a powerful symbol. This museum, the Woman's Active Museum on War and Peace (<http://www.wam-peace.org/>), receives daily threats. Also, removing the *uyoku* trucks and people from the grounds and vicinity of the Yasukuni Shrine would be another major step.
- b. A national day of remembrance should be established, similar to Memorial Day in the US or ANZAC day in Australia. This makes no one location more sacred and no group of people more bereaved than another.
- c. A *government* restitution commission similar to those in Germany and Austria should be established to address grievances by comfort women, POWs, slave laborers, non-Japanese nuclear victims, Japanese orphans left in China, and others. Legalistic solutions to these issues have engendered contempt and distrust. Prime Minister's Koizumi's example of restitution to the Japanese emigrants to the Dominican Republic is a good one.
- d. Memorials to the victims of the war should be created that school children can visit. Examples include: plaques at the docks where the Hellships and Korean laborers arrived; an interactive museum created from one of the Mitsubishi (i.e., Battleship Island) or Mitsui mines, and greater recognition of the Juganji Buddhist temple near Osaka that holds annual memorial services for foreign POW dead.

**2. China and Japan must recognize that the time of empire is over.** As the Europeans have learned, borders change and principalities come and go. Lingering historical claims over islets and boundaries are formulas for trouble and opportunities for demagogues. Every effort should be made toward practical, ahistoric resolutions to all territorial disputes. Allies of both countries need to indicate that they will not support or defend every territorial claim.

3. **China needs to show appreciation for Japan's efforts and seek ways to reassure Japan of its intentions.** China, too, needs to confront its wartime history. Not all Chinese were freedom fighters or heroic. Popular culture should be encouraged to present a more balanced picture of Japan and Japanese history. China also needs to take the high ground and not react to every provocative action by Japan. Japanese leaders need to understand that they are now on the world stage. They must measure their words and understand that there are sensitivities outside the islands.
4. **Japan must end its rhetoric of being Asia's "Thought Leader."** This campaign recalls other less benign Japanese efforts to lead Asia. It is neither appreciated nor well-received by other democracies in the region. It is also not true.

**The Yasukuni Shrine** seems to be a separate issue. It is symbolic of all that is wrong with the Sino/Korean-Japanese relationship. More important, it is a Japanese issue representing all of Japan's unresolved national identity and war angst. It is a world of mythic history and state religion. In many respects, however, it may be on its way to being resolved.

The recent, subtle but clear involvement of the Imperial House will go far to define the role of Yasukuni in Japan. After all, the Shrine was created by and for the Imperial House to glorify death in war for the Emperor. It is his job to depoliticize the memorial.

As many scholars note, Shinto is theologically unbound. If there is a consensus that the 14 Class A War Criminals (crimes against peace) should be dis-enshrined, it can and will happen. More difficult is to decide whether Yasukuni is a religious or state site. There are excellent arguments for both. In either case, the Yushukan (war museum) must be removed or substantially altered. The argument that the site is private falls apart when claims that it is a *national* place of mourning are also made.

It is very important to recognize that official visits to the Shrine are equally offensive to the Japanese people and Americans, British, Australians and others. The Yasukuni Shrine states clearly that it repudiates the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal and perpetrates the fiction that the Hull Document was meant to trick Japan into World War II. In fact, the convicted and enshrined Class A, B, and C war criminals at Yasukuni are referred to as the "martyrs of Showa." Japan's conservatives use the Shrine as a way to tacitly distance themselves from the U.S. and from U.S. policy. In many respects, the Shrine is a slap at Washington.

Another important issue is that Yasukuni's focus on the glorious dead from the Greater East Asian War ignores the fact that the Shrine is for all those Japanese who died in military service to their country since the civil war in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. The emphasis on the Pacific War, slighting other conflicts and those who sacrificed in them adds to the alarm of Yasukuni's critics.

In its current form, the Yasukuni Shrine ignores the strength and triumph of postwar Japan. Yasukuni glorifies death in war, as one becomes a god when enshrined there. Yasukuni rites preserve the memory of a war in which all deaths were selfless acts of bravery on behalf of the imperial institution; of a war which was ever noble and glorious. Moreover, not all Japanese

combatants are enshrined and some classes of Japanese are not allowed to be enshrined. Finally, no one who died in “military” service to their nation after the Pacific War can be considered for enshrinement. In effect, Yasukuni triages the dead to support a particular view of Japanese nationhood that is remote from today’s postwar modern, democratic Japan.

To “modernize” the Shrine, in addition to dis-enshrining all the convicted war criminals, may be to discuss the acceptability of the Prime Minister or Emperor visiting the *Chinriesha* Shrine at Yasukuni. This Shrine enshrines all those who fought against the Japanese empire including all allied combatants of WW II. It is to pacify their souls. Although they are enshrined collectively (the main shrine at Yasukuni only enshrines identified, named individuals) they receive, twice daily, Shinto rites and have their own festival on July 13. For now, the *Chinriesha* is fenced off and to the side of main shrine. It is hidden. The symbolism of the *Chinriesha* being unfenced, recognized, and guarded against right-wing fanatics has promise as a dramatic symbol of reconciliation. Noted Shinto scholar Dr. John Breen, finds that “The *Chinreisha* has the capacity to recall a more nuanced past, a past of perpetrators and of victims, of winners and losers, of horror as well as heroism”—of what war is all about.



### **Recommended Reading**

Breen, John. "Yasukuni – Rekishi Kioku no Keisei to Soushitsu" [Yasukuni – Formation and Loss of Historical Memories]. *SEKAI* (September 2006): pp.147-158.

Breen, John. "Yasukuni Shrine: Ritual and Memory." *Japan Focus* (3 June 2005), available at: <http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2060>

Gries, Peter. *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy*. University of California Press, 2004.

Hardacre, Helen. *Shinto and the State, 1868-1988 (Studies in Church and State)*. Princeton University Press; Reprint edition (August 12, 1991).

Nelson, John. "Social Memory as Ritual Practice: Commemorating Spirits of the Military Dead at Yasukuni Shinto Shrine." *Journal of Asian Studies* 62, 2003. Available at [www.pacificrim.usfca.edu/research/yasukuni\\_nelson.pdf](http://www.pacificrim.usfca.edu/research/yasukuni_nelson.pdf)

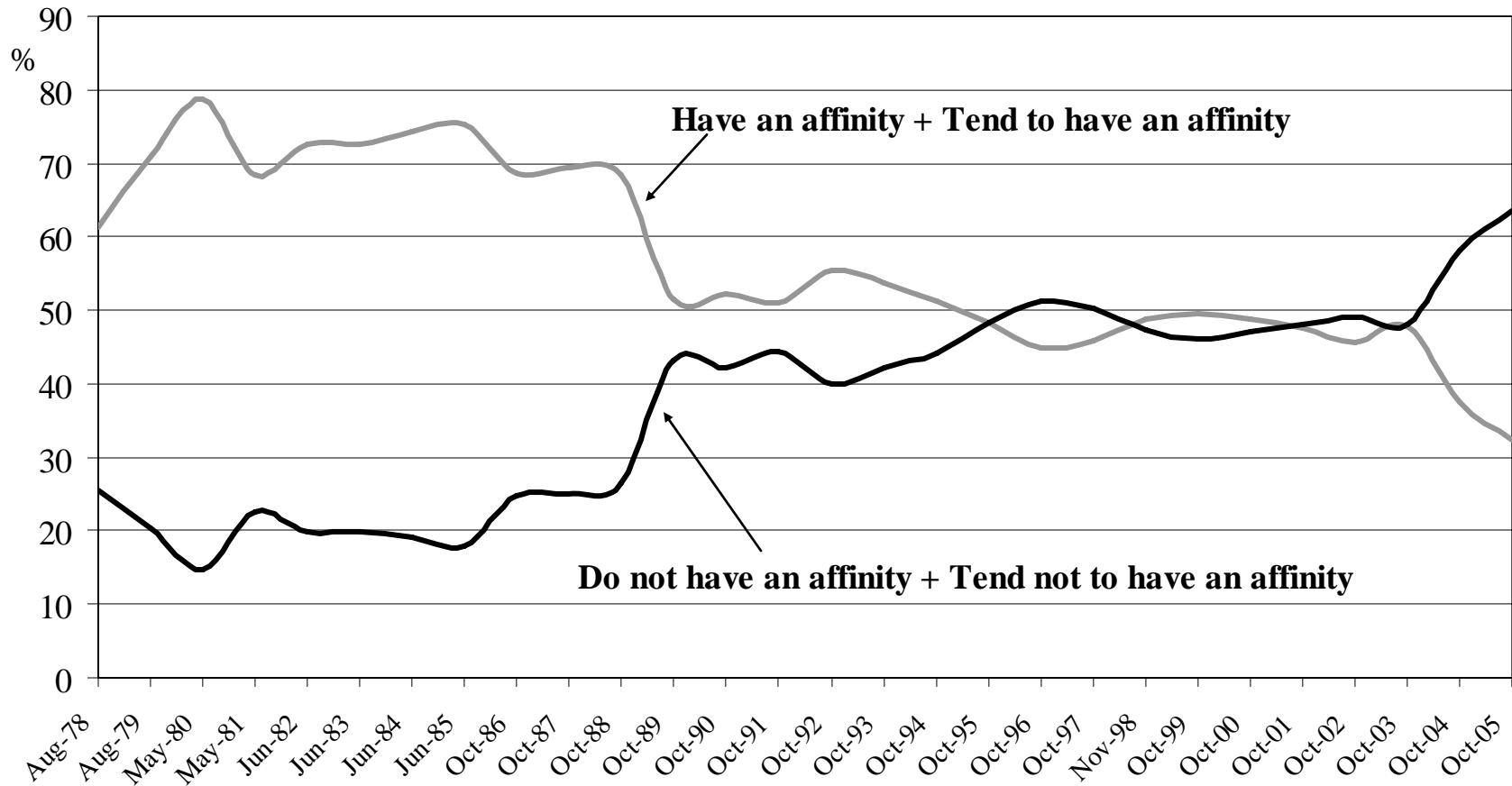
OECD, *Economic Survey of Japan, 2006, Policy Brief*, July 2006, p. 8, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/50/23/37148463.pdf>

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## Japanese Affinity toward China, 1978-2005

### Surveys by Cabinet Office, Government of Japan

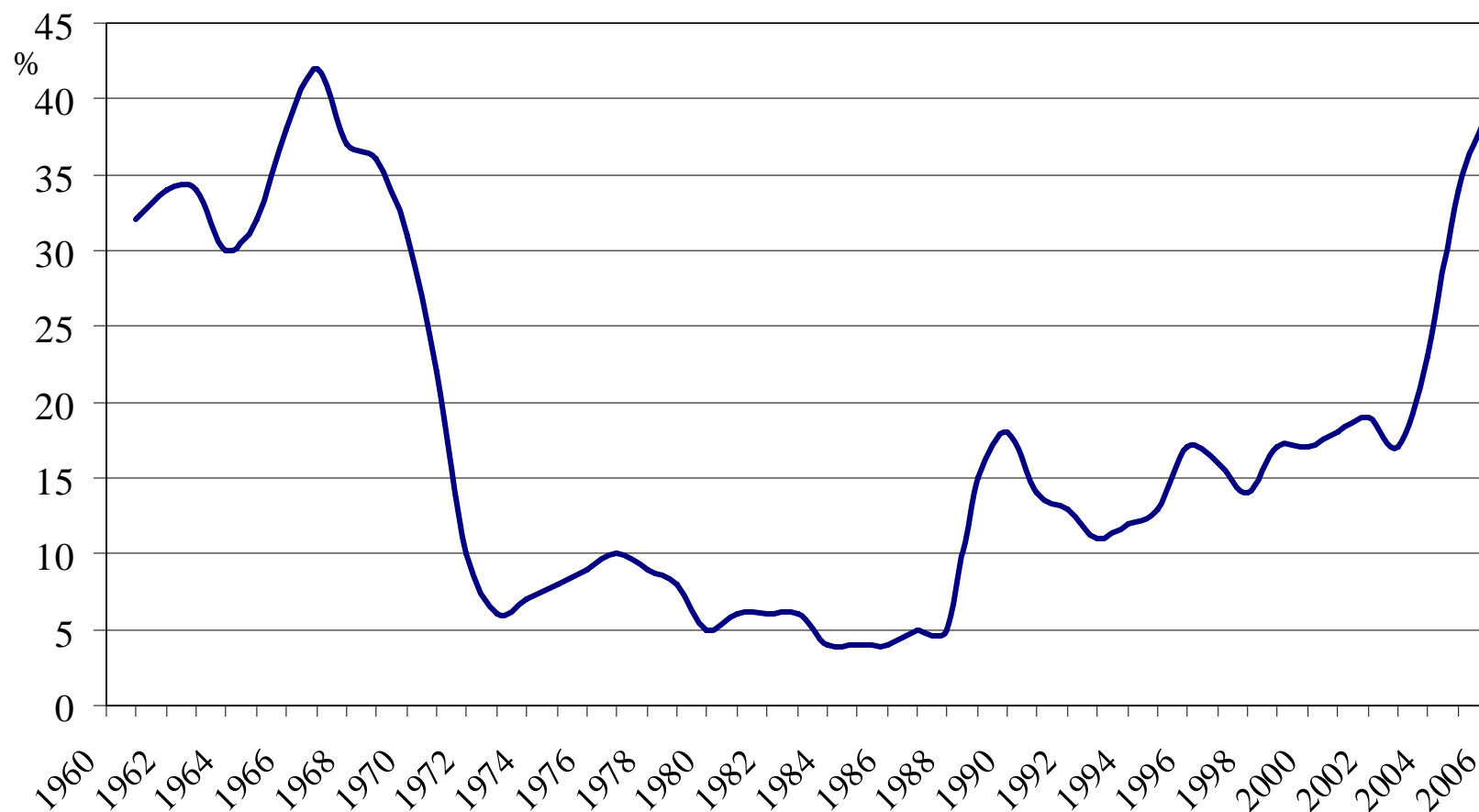


Source: Cabinet Office, *Gaiko ni kansuru Yoron Chousa* [Public Opinion Poll on Foreign Policy & Diplomacy], each year.

Notes: Nationwide surveys of 3,000 people over 20 years old in face-to-face interview format; Response rate was roughly 70 percent overall.

Available from <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/index-gai.html> (Japanese).

**Percentage of Japanese who Think of China as a “Disliked” Nation, 1960-2006**  
**Surveys by *Jiji Press*, Tokyo, Japan**



Source: Jiji Press, *Nihonjin no “Suki na Kuni / Kirai na Kuni” Chousa* [Surveys on Japanese “Liked/Disliked Nations”], each year.

Notes: Annual average of monthly data. 2006 figure is an average of the first eight month.